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m **magonia**

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**It is concluded
that the
incident
was due
to the presence
of five
reflecting objects
of unidentified type
and origin.**

**It is considered
unlikely that
they were
conventional aircraft,
meteorological
balloons
or charged clouds**

**DDI (Tech), 30th April 1957
Ministry of Defence**

Is this the nearest we're ever likely to get to a British Government admission, "UFOs are Real"? See page 12

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A UFOLOGIST

Patrick Harpur

Dear John: I just wanted to drop you a line to say how sorry I was to miss all but the last afternoon of the *Magonia* conference. It was as illuminating to see what A. N. Magonia reader looked like as it was to hear the talks.

However, I was disturbed by your apparent *ennui* over ufology. "Where's it all going", you cried, "should we pack it in?". No, no, I reply. You ufologists fill a unique ecological niche. If you were to become extinct, I dread to think what far-reaching consequences might occur. The collapse of the whole psychological food chain perhaps. Who then will attend to and nurture that social 'liminal zone' where myths unfold?

I have something not very coherent to say about this, and since I'm lucky enough not to

be an expert, I'll say it (*there!* you see? who else am I going to write to if *Magonia* goes to the wall?).

Méheust, Rogerson, *et al* have pointed out the resemblance between the physical ordeals of abductees and the initiations of shamans. Need we look that far? The most important rite of passage - the puberty rite - has features which, if not universal, are extremely common, viz, the candidate is abruptly abducted from his family, tribe, habitat to an isolated liminal zone - a place of transition such as a cave or a secret glade in the forest or some 'grave' where he (or she) may be covered with brushwood. (Such places are like the caravans in the trailer park at the edge of town: precarious pockets of 'habitat' amidst the encroach-

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ing 'wilderness' where Big Feet (Foots?) roam and UFOs flash their warning lights).

The abductors often look identical, e.g. wearing masks with almond-shaped eyes and little slots for mouths. They terrify the child. They torture him with circumcision, tattooing, scarification (i.e. scarring, not scarifying!) on his penis, face, chest, arms, head, etc. They give him a momentous message - the tribal lore which is vouchsafed to the (male) adults of the tribe alone. Such treatment is not the prerogative of shamans; it is deemed necessary for everyone who has to forsake their childish status and enter the adult world.

In contrast, we have to shift for ourselves in the matter of puberty rites. But it is difficult to make that crucial transition - to grow up - without a social framework. Confirmation in the Church of England is not as impressive as it might be (or once was). Moreover it can be argued that ratification by society is not only desirable, but necessary - because it is impossible to be an adult without society's seal of approval (the successful tribal candidate returns in triumph from his ordeal, bearing the visible signs of his new status as an adult). So, rites there have to be. If they weren't provided who knows

what terrible initiations we may unwittingly inflict on ourselves?

Many people manage by themselves to make that transition, not confined to puberty, in the solitude of whatever liminal zone they can find or construct, where the familiar suddenly puts on its strange, beautiful, terrifying mask. The scars they receive there are not visible, but are nevertheless real - although I suspect that *actual* scars are always preferable because then there can be no doubt of reality, just as we can mistake the cause of pain, while never being in doubt about the pain itself (a scream is always irreducible).

If we don't bring to consciousness the importance of making the transition from child to adult, we lay ourselves open to abduction at a later date. If we do become conscious, we are liable to grow into ufologists (or worse). In both cases we are seized by UFOs. Perhaps contactees enter their own psychological liminal zone while ufologists, having overcome that hurdle, enter the sociological liminal zone. Either way, UFOs would seem to be themselves the liminal zones between, on the one hand, us and our hidden selves and, on the other, between us and what I shall boldly call the world.

Whatever experience we have of UFOs, direct or indirect, the most we can hope for perhaps is a self-knowledge. And that's not a negligible thing. Who but the ufologists, at home in the liminal zone, can teach society to grow up? The likes of Rogerson, contrary to all appearances, are the huge sasquatches that come in the night to shake the great trailer of society while its occupants sleep blithely on... don't you think?

Best Wishes

Patrick.

• We are happy to assure Patrick, and our readers, that any ennui he may have detected was a consequence of post-Conference exhaustion, which was rapidly replaced by a bold spirit of driving optimism. Ed.

Northern Echoes, by the deceptively huge sasquatch Peter Rogerson, will be back next issue, along with readers letters (if we get any) and an extended book review feature.

"My first contact with Hugh Burnett was in July 1976, when he first mooted the idea of the programme, having had lunch with Charles Bowen and others at *Flying Saucer Review*.

At the root of the problem is the belief that television should be the guardian and bastion of knowledge. Television perpetuates the

myth that science is all knowing and understanding. This is maintained via such programmes as *Tomorrow's World* which shows the direct application of scientific principles to everyday situations. In more abstract and problematic areas of scientific research, documentary series such as *Horizon* usually show how scientists propose to answer these questions via their existing research programmes and projects.

The scientist, or more often the teams of scientists and researchers who are busy beavering away in their laboratories, rarely directly address the television audience. Instead, television personalities mediate their knowledge to us (e.g. Patrick Moore has been the spokesman for astronomy and related subjects since the 1950s on British television) or experts become 'entertaining' personalities themselves (e.g. Carl Sagan, Miriam Stoppard and Laurie Taylor). Such tactics hide the complexities, controversies and ignorance of science.

Many of the people investigating UFO cases believe in the principles of science, and advocate more scientific research into the subject. Indeed, in the past few years more scientists have shown a lively interest in the matter and have conducted research in this field. But because this work has not been incorporated into the larger body of scientific concepts and beliefs it maintains its loony fringe status. Television usually reflects this status and, as we have seen, highlights and exaggerates its loony aspects.

As a consequence it reinforces the dominant ideology of our society and culture. This underlying ideology extols the virtues of science and technology which is the product of rational, logical, sober thinking, and clinical production processes.¹⁰

Although the efforts of the Aetherius Society are 'funny' to the scientific and rational UFO investigators and researchers, as well as to most viewers, we should understand

why this is the case. The ironic and contradictory point is that a belief in flying saucers is a type of religion that venerates technology.¹¹ At the same time it is a reaction against human science and technology - the atomic bomb, pollution, etc.

The majority believe, or are meant to believe, in the great oracle of truth and wisdom: television - whereas those ridiculed by it believe in a greater technological and scientific force - the flying saucers. ■■■

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2. BOURRET, Jean-Claude (trans. Gordon Creighton); 'The Crack in the Universe'; Sudbury, Suffolk, Neville Spearman, 1977.
3. RIMMER, John; 'Notes, Quotes and Queries', *MUFOB New Series*, No. 7, 1971, p. 14.
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5. One of these was Dr J Allen Hynek who was used by Steven Spielberg as a consultant for his film 'Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind'. Indeed the title was inspired by Hynek's UFO coding system.
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9. This type of lust for sensation was particularly evident when I attend the recording of a programme about out-of-the-body experiences on 19 September 1984. The set featured a mock Grecian temple and the presenter in a bright pink dress spent several minutes revealing a garter on her leg to a photographer (presumably for newspaper and magazine publicity). The session began with the playback of a video tape of a woman singing a banal song that repeated the title of the show *Do you believe it?* The rest of the programme consisted of relatively straightforward and sensible interviews and discussion about the subject. Obviously somebody thought that the bitter pill of facts needed sugaring! Fortunately, as far as I know, the programme was never broadcast. See: *Northern UFO News*, No. 109, 1984, pp. 2-3.
10. Television itself is a manifestation of the great power of science and technology.
11. Erich von Däniken's 'Chariots of the Gods', London, Corgi, 1971, and other 'God was an astronaut' type books make this point abundantly clear. Basically UFO believers want to transcend human science, whereas UFO investigators/researchers want to incorporate this belief into the scientific mainstream. ■■■

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OFF LIMITS

Ufology and the Deconstruction of Reality

Peter Rogerson

When I wrote my column *Northern Echoes* to mark the 20th anniversary of MUFORG two years ago I practically wrote the obituary for ufology. Recent developments show that this, like so many such laments, was premature.

There is, I think, a growing separation between the revived 'folklore' of ufology, and the viws of 'serious ufologists'. The folklore is one of secrecy, hidden things and duplicity.

Two recent books, [1,2] have brought home to British ufologists one of the major themes of American saucer ufoklore - the Great Conspiracy/Crashed Saucer Saga. Pages of print are devoted to the minute discussion of governmental ephemera and pseudo ephemera. Clearly the mental climate of *Irangate* and *Spycatcher* holds sway here.

The message is ultimately reassuring - Big Daddy in the White House (or Mummy at No. 10) do know what is going on, even if they do not tell us children - after all, we might panic or lose our innocence. The Freudian symbolism is too obvious to count on: parental figures are not letting us in on the truth about alien intruders like foetuses hidden in secret places.

The tellers of the crashed saucer tales clearly gain kudos: they are an elite, they know where Mummy and Daddy have hidden the Christmas presents, and where babies come from. They are children who have gained a toe-hold in the world of grownups. This is maturity of protected innocence, where the grownups may take over again. Like the children in *Lord of the Flies*, they still believe grownups to be wise, calm, all-knowing and protective. There is a fall from innocence still to come.

This fall is perhaps best expressed in the folklore of the abductee, which is just part of the folklore of the secret victim. Budd Hopkins'

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book [3] deals with ultimate fears. Children taken from their homes, experimented on, tagged like animals; women made pregnant by aliens; changeling children taken away but returning in dreams. These are the themes of fairylore, before fairylore was domesticated and made safe for the nursery. [4,5]

The Terror comes into a child's bedroom - visitors from that first Wilderness, the dark place under a child's bed, or the closet in the corner [6]. Kathie Davis's son Robbie has a night-terror: "Mummy, a man with a big head came in my wall and went into my closet and kept going back and forth and wouldn't let me move. And he had lights around his head. The man wanted Tommy, Mummy, he wouldn't let me move". [3, p.75]

This for Hopkins is good evidence, the best spectral evidence we can have for alien abductions. Other adults would use the same narrative as good evidence for rings of satanic child abusers: "He was afraid

to go to bed and I asked him why. He said 'Because of the spiders'. I said 'C'mon, there are no spiders under there' and he said 'Oh yes there are, the man down the street told me there are'. I said 'What man?' and he said 'The man who ties me up and puts me in the closet'" [7]

Similarly we may recall the accounts of those who have had childhood fears of haunted houses and 'not-quite-right' rooms, told to Andrew MacKenzie. [8]

For just how easily the categories of abduction and child abuse can run together, take this story from a recent issue of the *Observer* [9]. A fifteen year old black girl disappears for a few days, and reappears in a small town in New York. She is covered in dog faeces and racist graffiti, and tells a tale of abduction and rape by white men in a black car, like the ones MIB use. But there is no physical evidence, her schoolbooks mysteriously reappear at school; perhaps she has just been hiding in a former flat. And yet... all the old Travis Walton questions come back again. She now refuses to speak, and the case has become a racial and political cause célèbre.

Here we have echoes of children taken by the fairies or the gypsies or the spirits of the far forest. In Japan this was known as a *kamigakushi*, or abduction by a *kami*. A boy or young man would disappear from his home, and was believed carried off by a supernatural being to its own realm. Upon the recital of appropriate spells the abductee would reappear days later in some inaccessible place, such as the eaves of a temple or the cramped space between the ceiling and roof of his own home. he would lie for days in a stupor, and afterwards may always remain a halfwit. But he may recover to tell of a tall stranger or strangers with gleaming eyes, in the form of a mountain sage, or of a flight in the sky, of visions of the Great Wall of China or visits to the sun, moon, or underground passages and caves. At first he may have enjoyed the flight, but later would ask to go home, whereupon he was deposited where he was found. [10]

The myth of the secret victim

The average run-of-the-mill UFO experience of course, does

not have this power. But when 'Valerie of Peckham' sees a star and reports it as a UFO, it is a kind of revelation, a seeing for the very first time. She is seeing the world without our usual mental maps. A logical chain of thought is set up which runs

"I would not feel like this is I were looking at a star. but I might feel like this if I were looking at a spaceship, therefore I probably am looking at a spaceship"

These logical chains are in psychological terms 'secondary delusions', attempts to rationalise the primary sense of 'otherness' and uncanniness. There is a stripping away or shift of meaning of perception. The percipient is momentarily lost in a wilderness of raw perception, bereft of the normal psycho-social maps. [20]

It is not surprising that percipients resist 'rational explanations', for such explanations do *not* correspond with the percipient's own experience. Valerie *knows* that it was not a star she saw. Any map, however defective, is better than no map at all.

The dominant folklore in British ufology at the moment appears to be Earthlights or Spooklights. The powerful appeal of this concept lies in its romantic roots. It is a folklore of open spaces, where tales still survive of the eerie secrets of wild nature, before TV and streetlights robbed them of their wonder. It remains a useful antidote to the rather theory-bound nature of much ufology, which carefully screens itself from raw narrative behind masses of computerese and pseudoscience.

On the other hand the EL hypothesis seems to combine reductionism and romanticism in equal amounts. There is implicit in some of the arguments of Persinger, *et al* a view of social phenomena which seeks to explain them in terms of physical, environmental factors. One writer - I forget who - tried to 'explain' the 1906 Liberal landslide in terms of sunspot activity. This can lead to arguments of the type 'If it wasn't for the lead in petrol our children would be nice and docile', which can easily develop into more sinister lines.

And is not the Romantic view
of the past expressed in this

lore, close to the 'preserve the dark satanic mills' type of heritageism which blocks out the reality of past pain and suffering. I note particularly how in his treatment of the Pendle witches, David Clark subsumes the reality of social strife and persecution into a landscape romanticism, by projecting terror from the human community onto the wild landscape.



PETER ROGERSON
speaking at the *Magonia*
20th Anniversary Conference

There is within Devereux's presentation a hidden agenda. Many people have criticised his ideas about mental manipulation of subtle energies as seriously detracting from an otherwise 'reasonable' theory. But is not the manipulative claim close to the heart of this ideology? This is what transforms the percipient from being a helpless victim of environmental or social forces, into a manipulator, an artist on a grand scale, sculpting the landscape, exercising his will over wild nature. One up on Billy Meier indeed!

Is there not in psycho-social ufology, too, something of this? A determination to assert the autonomy, self-reliance and creativity of human beings against the bleak, impersonal forces of the cosmos, and much of our society. Does not the idea of the alien encroaching on human affairs imply a gigantic 'no say', an arbitrary

veto on human possibilities.

We can thus see that ufological folklore oscillates between visions of human helplessness before a limitlessly powerful 'other', and visions of limitless power and individual creativity.

Ufologists will have to be very careful how they handle this folklore. Perhaps accepting that they are folklorists, recorders of stories - and not freelance geophysicists, intelligence agents or psychiatric social workers - will be the first step on the road to wisdom. ☐☐☐

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not only a mystery story which makes those which challenged Hercule Poirot hardly more devious than the difficulties surmounted by Noddy, but also a spiritual exercise as effectively purgative as any DIY course in spring-cleaning the psyche. It's not possible to seriously study the phenomenon as it currently presents itself and not be brought against such consciousness raising brainteasers as What is Reality? What is Truth? What is the Ultimate Meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything?

Indeed, as much as the elusiveness and ambiguity of the phenomenon. It is the far-reachingness of its implications which may account for the reluctance of professional scientists to get involved. Scientists like finite answers which can at least be conceptualised. With UFOs there is no knowing where they will carry us. One thing is clear enough: the research of the old days is already out of date, and not simply because our standards have improved so much that the data our forerunners bequeathed us is virtually useless. We're not just asking *more* questions, we are asking *different* questions. Even if it should turn out that UFO reports have a basis in reality, it is evident that it is a different kind of reality than the one we are used to in our daily lives.

Many are turned off the subject for precisely this reason. If you are a hard-headed person who has quite enough difficulty with old-fashioned consensus reality, parallel realities are something you need like a puncture on the motorway. And if UFOs were the only phenomenon threatening to upset our everyday thinking, we could be excused for dodging the issues they raise. But UFOs are not unique, in this or any other respect. We don't have to go back to the witchcraft age for parallels. Read for instance Graham McEwan's study of mystery animals in here-and-now Britain: all the evidence is that many of our fellow citizens are having ongoing encounters with unreality - in the form of animals which quite simply defy reason - just as disconcerting in their implications as our UFOs.⁶ So how do we set about undisconcerting ourselves?

Our easiest course is to reject the evidence. Some of us have tried that: the trouble is the more we filter out the noise, the more bizarre is the signal we're left with.

Next best: find explanations within the structure of our existing knowledge. Well, we've tried that too, but even hunting in the remotest crannies of William Corliss's catalogues or unearthing the wierdest case histories of the psychologists' textbooks, we can't find precedents for everything that's happening.

Another thing we've tried is to shunt the awkward material to one side and deal only with that which we feel capable of handling, like NICAP did with the contactees. Trouble is, you can't draw hard and fast boundary lines. Even the simplest case involves a witness, and we have painfully learned that even the most plausible witness requires evaluation: which leads into the whole psychosocial scene.



HILARY EVANS

Displaying his encyclopaedic knowledge
at the *Magonia* Conference!

Likewise, thousands of reports feature beams of light: we can't dismiss the fact that anomalous beams of light have been a standard folklore item from way back, but again that leads us into a vast new territory, this time the wide, unmapped faerie-filled wilds of Maqonia . . .

Up to a point it's a healthy instinct to keep things simple if we can. If every time someone reported a light in the sky we had to consider not simply the possibility of misidentification and misinterpretation, and the meteorological and astronomical

implications, but also the psychological, parapsychological, cultural, mythological and any-other-logical parameters, we'd bog down in a morass of data knowing some, maybe most of it, is irrelevant.

But also knowing, from painful experience, that one man's UFO is another man's satellite, planet, advertising plane, hallucination, wish-fulfillment, visiting space brother, you name it . . .

Again, it's like witchcraft. At the time, many highly intelligent minds grappled with the data that flooded in; they did what they could in the light of their belief systems, and the result was - as we now know - disastrous. Only now, thanks to the spadework of Charcot, Janet, Freud, can we start to comprehend the nature of what *really* happened during the witch mania. Indeed, many of us still have these lessons to learn, as witness the continued manifestations of 'demon possession' and 'channeling', not to mention the on-going abduction craze.

We now know that witchcraft was a reality, but not the reality of the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. In the same way, it is likely that the UFO phenomenon is a reality - but not the reality it seemed when Kenneth Arnold touched down at Yakima.

Thanks to Keel and Randles, Rimmer and Méheust, and many others, there's not much chance that any of us will ever again take a UFO report at face value, not looking before or after. Even if it should turn out that there really are alien spacecraft back of the phenomenon, they have triggered a multi-dimensional response in us humans which will - like witchcraft - have lasting implications.

Unfortunately, one of the insidious effects of ambiguity is to discourage study. Knowing that UFOs are not what they seem to be, we incline to be suspicious of any attempt to demonstrate that they are anything at all. An understandable attitude, and up to a point admirable. Indeed we should be sceptical when a fellow researcher claims to have broken through the reality barrier.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT UFO FILES IN THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Roger J Morgan

This paper reports on an investigation into unidentified flying object files held in the Public Records Office. The Public Records Office (PRO) is the official repository for the historical records of the British government. Each department has a departmental records officer who is in charge of its non-current files. After (generally) 30 years from the date of closing of the file it is considered for permanent archiving. Any that pass this 'weeding' process are passed to the PRO and become available for public inspection.

However, some files of a politically sensitive nature are closed for 50 or 75 years, and those relating to individuals for 100 years. The files of some departments, notably the Security and Secret Services, are closed indefinitely and never transferred to the PRO.

As far as I am aware this is the first time an attempt has been made to see if there are any files relating to UFOs in the PRO. The object was to attempt to clarify the deep-seated mythology of ufology that there is an official UFO investigation department with extensive files, knowing 'the truth', and the corollary of this -- that there is a 'cover up'.

I have so far found four files, one opened last year, and three this year -- each after 30 years. They therefore cover the period up to 1958; what might be called the first 'flying saucer' phase of ufology.

THE FILES

The files reveal that there was a section of the Ministry of Defence concerned with receiving, recording and evaluating UFO reports. Unfortunately, as is so often the case, none of them are actually from

this department and details of it can only be incidentally inferred.

File 1

PRO ref: AIR 20 7390
Department: Air Ministry Deputy Director of Operations (Air Defence)\58 (DDOps(AD)\58)
Covering: 11 December 1950 - 12 January 1954
Title: 'Unidentified Aircraft', amended to 'Unidentified Flying Objects'
Classification: SECRET

This is a mixed bag containing a 'light in the sky' report from a Group Captain Cartmel; a briefing for the Secretary of State on an obscurely worded Parliamentary Question which turned out to be about the preparedness for a 'Pearl Harbour' type attack on Scapa Flow; a 'daylight disc' report from RAF Topcliffe; a query from Middle East Air Force on how an interceptor should indicate to the interceptee that he should land; and an investigation of an unidentified radar track which entered and left UK airspace.

Cartmel's report was dealt with initially by Air Intelligence 3, who asked DDOps(AD) if they wished to investigate. They passed them to ASA(O) with the comment (1 January 1951): "I suppose reports of this sort

might, if kept, one day be useful for analysis -- I can't think of any other use for this one." They were passed back with the comment: "Save papers for future reference." It is evident from this exchange that this is the first time the subject had been raised with a central department, no other department known to Air Ministry Intelligence was concerned, and that no great importance was attached to it.

The RAF Topcliffe report is of considerably higher quality. Several officers and men observed for twenty seconds at 7.10 pm on 19 September 1952, a Meteor fighter shadowed by a silver disc, which spun about a vertical axis, descended with a sycamore pendulum motion, and finally accelerated 'faster than a shooting star' in a curve.

This was evidently taken more seriously, as it was distributed to Air Intelligence 3(b) (Action); Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations) (Action); Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Intelligence); Chief of Air Staff; Secretary of State; DMO [?]; Ministry of Defence for DSI [?].

It was annotated by Ops(AD)1 to Ops(AD)2: "Ask Personal Assistant to open Folder 'Unidentified Aircraft or Objects reported to the Air Ministry' - Speak."

Thus at this date there still was not any official collating or investigation of reports. The investigation of the unidentified radar track, requested by Fighter Command of DDIOps(AD) with a copy to A13(e), was assumed to be a conventional aircraft, but is a precursor to some reports in the later files of radar tracks that could not have been known aircraft.

The last document on the file is a request from DDOps(AD)58 to Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Fighter Command that similar reports should be forwarded for investigation as soon as possible. As Fighter Command initiated the request it is clear that no service unit was involved in such research.

File 2

PRO ref: AIR 20 9994

Department: RAF Southern Sector
Intelligence
Covering: 16 December 1953 to 9 December 1957

Opened: 14 May 1957

Title: Reports on Aerial Phenomena

Classification: SECRET

This is principally an account of two radar cases with an allied LIS in the summer of 1957, during what appears to have been a general UFO 'flap'. The originator is a service rather than a government department, Royal Air Force Southern Sector Headquarters, fifty feet underground in a Bathstone quarry at RAF Rudloe Manor, Box, Wiltshire. The documents are a collation of ones copied to them for information by the main protagonists, and therefore give a partial picture.

The first items, however, considerably predate the opening of the file, and must have been transferred from some earlier file. These are the standing instructions on reporting 'Aerial Phenomena', dated December 1953, and sent to all fighter airfields and radar stations in southern England.

In the case of visual phenomena, reports in writing were to be sent by officers commanding units to Deputy Director Intelligence (Technical) [DDI(Tech)] at the Air Ministry. Any reports received from the public should be acknowledged in writing and also forwarded to DDI(Tech). As the public attached more credence to RAF reports it was therefore essential that information be examined by the Air Ministry and its release be officially controlled. Any such information was therefore classified RESTRICTED and was not to be communicated to unauthorised persons.

Unusual radar targets, defined as those with a ground speed exceeding 700 knots at any height, and any speed above 60,000 feet, were to be notified to the supervisor who would check they were not spurious and record the strength and appearance of the echo throughout the contact, range and bearing of pickup and fade points, and ground speed/track. These details were then to be transmitted through the normal channels as required by Fighter Command. These orders were recirculated three years later in December

1956, as recent reports showed some units were unaware of them

The majority of the remainder of the file consists of documentation of the events of 29 April and 29 July 1957. As these are somewhat disjointed, independently deriving from fighter units and radar stations, I reconstruct the events in a logical sequence.

On 29 April at 8 pm a Mr L. Humphries in Shanklin, Isle of Wight, accompanied by two other witnesses, saw a LIS to the south-east which he examined through 8x binoculars, which resolved a large and small object. They moved slowly against the star background, and at 8.07 he phoned Pilot Officer Coles, on duty at the long-range radar at Ventnor, Isle of Wight. Ventnor asked the radar station at Beachy Head if they could see anything and they reported two stationary targets that looked like 'angels' (a spurious atmospheric effect), and ten minutes later that one had faded.

However, at 9 pm the radar station at St Margarets reported two fast tracks over Somerset, which were acquired by Ventnor. [Notice that this is north-west from Shanklin, i.e. in the exactly opposite direction from Humphries' sighting.] The two tracks diverged, one travelling north-east, but Ventnor obtained a speed of 800 knots on the other which travelled south-west. The Ground Control Intercept radar at Hope Cove diverted one of two Javelins already in the air from RAF Odiham to intercept, range 12 miles. He was vectored on to the track from the ground, but the track reached the limit of Hope Cove's range west of Land's End, and the Javelin was called off.

At no time did he get a visual sighting, and his airborne interception radar picked nothing up either despite functioning perfectly at 14 miles range in the practice interceptions he had been engaged in before being diverted. Ventnor lost the track at 9.10, when Mr Humphries at Shanklin reported by phone only one object visible, which was becoming difficult to distinguish due to its proximity to Jupiter. Reports were carried in six

national papers the next day, when speeds of 1000 mph were quoted.

Subsequent investigation showed that the timing and tracks were consistent with two of a training flight of sixteen Hunters, the north-east track in fact landing at Horsham St Faith, Norwich. The speed was reassessed at 580 knots.

Five days later on 23 May, Odiham reported that two Hunters practising interceptions at 12.10 am over Hayling Island had seen a large white circular object with slightly curving tail hanging down which they at first thought was a parachute, but then realised was larger and further away due to the slow passing speed.

Three months later on 29 July at 4.16 pm, a different supervisor at Ventnor, Flying Officer Hassall, picked up a very fast track, 1000-1400 knots, over Belgium, which he designated an X-raid, i.e. hostile, as he had no record of similar friendly movements. He thought it might be spurious until he got a height fix of 42,000 feet [the planimetric position was given by a Type 80 radar and the height by a separate Type 13 radar]. Neither of the radar stations at Wartling or Sopley could see anything, and at 4.38 the track disappeared over Brighton, as it was too close [entered Ventnor's PE's]. The Air Defence NC at Box suggested they might be Scimitars. At 4.28 a second echo appeared over Belgium with the same track and speed as the first.

Files 3, 4 AND 5

PRO refs: AIR 20 9320, 9321 and 9322
Department: Air Ministry Secretariat 6
Covering: January 1955 to 15 May 1957
Title: Parliamentary Questions 193\57, 213\57 and 220\57
Opened: April 1957

These files document the background briefings for the Secretary of State when answering questions in the House.

Mr Stan Awbery asked on 17 April: "What investigations of UFOs had been carried out, what photographs and reports were held?" Major Patrick Wall asked on 15 May: "How many UFOs had been detected this

year as compared to previous years, and whether the object picked up over the Dover Straits on 29 April had yet been identified?" Frank Beswick asked on 15 May: "What was the nature of the object on radar on Monday night which occasioned the dispatch of Fighter Command?"

The first question was triggered by the 'West Freugh Incident' of 4 April (see below). The second and third questions, triggered by the events in File 2, were combined.

Secretariat 6 liaised with DDI(Tech), who provided all the information for the briefings. They reported from their records as follows:

• In 1955-6 they had received 64 reports of unusual aerial phenomena. These had been classified as 26 balloons, 16 meteors, 8 aircraft, 2 planets, 3 flares, 1 mock sun, 1 fireball [sic] and one contrail. The unexplained cases, which all occurred in 1956, were:

- The navigator of a Vulcan obtained a radar contact for 1 minute 15 seconds with an invisible object.

On 19 March, Lakenheath radar detected a target moving at 2000-4000 knots which then stopped and hovered at a high altitude. A Venom was scrambled to intercept but saw nothing. It could have been inversion and reflection from the ionosphere ('angels' and 'anaprop').

• RAF Wethersfield vectored two interceptors on to a radar target, and one obtained a brief visual contact. No other radars could see it.

* A member of the Royal Observer Corps reported something with insufficient information to identify it as any particular thing.

- A BSc reported an object at 12,000 feet which may have been a balloon.

- A man saw a round object emitting rippling waves like heat shimmer; it was not known what it might have been.

In 1957 up to April there had been 16 reports, classified as 1 radar fault, 2 aircraft navigation lights, 1 meteor, 2 flares, 1 private experiment and 3 newspaper reports (1, the Jersey UFO in the *Daily Sketch* of 6 April, had been admitted to be a fake).

□ □

However, the report on the West Freugh incident contains as its conclusion the nearest we have so far got to an official recognition that UFOs exist as artefacts

[illegible]

The unexplained cases were:

The 'West Freugh' case, Wigtownshire. On 4 April a stationary target was observed by the Balscalloch radar to rise vertically from 50,000 to 70,000 feet in 10 minutes. The object was automatically plotted by two radars alternately as it moved off slowly to the north towards a second radar station 20 miles away. After travelling 20 miles it made a very sharp turn to the south-east and picked up speed to 240 mph at 50,000 feet. The second radar also picked up a target in the correct position, but this resolved itself into four objects at 14,000 feet travelling in line astern about 4,000 yards apart. When the single object passed beyond Balscalloch's range they also could see these four. The echoes were much larger than normal aircraft, in fact nearer to those of ships. There were no known aircraft or balloons in the area (in any case they had made sharp turns against the wind), and a passing V-bomber had been correctly tracked at the same time.

- On 26 March at RAF Church Lawford a target accelerated from rest to 1400 mph.

- A report from Kent thought to have been a balloon.

- A Glasgow boy of ten who observed an object at 10,000 feet travelling at 750 mph for 15 seconds.

* A Coverack postman, Mr Eric Pengelly, who on 1 May saw a domed object like a sliced egg, which after 10 minutes rose at 45° at an incredible speed.

The West Freugh incident had unfortunately fallen into the hands of the press, but the Lakenheath and Church Lawford reports had remained secret.

The events of 29 April were really two separate events

which had become confused, of which only the second had come out. Initially amateur astronomers had reported two objects near the Isle of Wight which were picked up by Ventnor and were consistent with meteorological balloons. This made Ventnor alert for unusual phenomena, which is how they interpreted the two Hunters later in the evening.

DDI(Tech) liaised with and obtained advice from the Royal Observatory, the Meteor Section of the British Astronomical Association, the Meteorological Office, London Airport, Bristol University (research balloons), the Navy and RAF (aircraft movements).

The suggested answer was: "Reports of UFOs are continually being received. Where there is sufficient information the majority of the reports can be explained as balloons and meteors; the rest lack sufficient information for any explanation."

These files show that DDI(Tech) had been receiving, collating and investigating fairly substantial numbers of UFO reports since 1955, with a wide circle of advising organisations. There are at least 10 original newspaper clippings in the files, so they were gathering press reports too.

THE STRUCTURE DEDUCIBLE

So we see that there was no formal central collection of UFO reports before January 1951. DDOps(AD) opened such a file for record purposes in September 1952. Responsibility passed to DDI(Tech) in January 1953 who seem to have formalised the reporting system and started analysing reports from 1955.

Very few reports were regarded as unexplained, and of those the majority were unexplainable due to lack of data. There was a single impressive case, the radar sighting at West Freugh. Here five objects, either very large or with very high radar reflectance, were detected by three independent radars with hard copy output, and behaved in a manner inconsistent with any known object.

THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED

It is evident that DDI(Tech) was the only unit working in

this field; there was, for instance, no service research organisation. It is unfortunate that none of the files opened derive from DDI(Tech) itself.

It is evident that DDI(Tech), and DDops(AD)\AI(3) before them, had no startling secret knowledge of the solution to the UFO enigma -- as has been alleged in America regarding the Majestic papers on crashed saucer investigations, for example.

The UFO enigma was militarily assessed as a tactically non-threatening problem, and probably trivial. Military personnel were just as susceptible to 'flaps' and misperception as anyone else. The argument will no doubt be

advanced that there was a super-secret UFO investigation department, and that either DDI(Tech) were unaware of it, or that they never existed and these files are a plant. The latter point is easily checked; one has only to find A Giffen Peacock, a pleasingly distinctive name, who signed all their reports, and is listed in the Air Force List from January 1957 to April 1962.

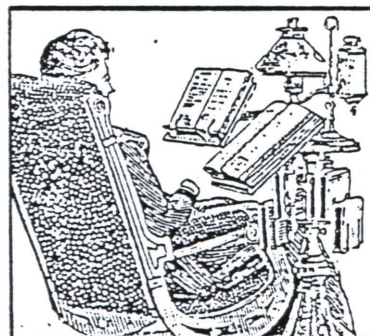
Personally, I incline to the cock-up rather than the cover-up theory of government, and indeed the radar plots in the files have at least two major errors in them. It is not a nice thought that the air defence of the United Kingdom was in the hands of incompetents!

However, the report on the West Freugh incident contains as its conclusion the nearest we have so far got to an official recognition that UFOs exist as artefacts:

"It is concluded that the incident was due to the presence of five reflecting objects of unidentified type and origin. It is considered unlikely that they were conventional aircraft, meteorological balloons or charged clouds.

DDI(Tech) 30 April 1957." □□□

This text formed the basis of the author's presentation to the *Magonia* 20th Anniversary conference.



BOOK REVIEWS

EVANS, Hilary, with SPENCER, John (compilers and editors). *UFOs 1947-1987: the 40-year search for an explanation*. Fortean Tomes, 1987. £12.50.

EVANS, Hilary, and SPENCER, John (compilers and editors). *Phenomenon; from flying saucers to UFOs - forty years of facts and research*. Macdonald, 1988.

These two volumes, edited by Evans and Spencer for BUFORA celebrate the fortieth anniversary of 'flying saucers'. They mark an important stage in the maturing of ufology. For convenience in this review I shall refer to the Fortean Tomes book as 'U' and the Macdonald volume as 'P'. With 48 articles in 'U' and 47 in 'P' it is, even allowing for the duplication, impossible to review each satisfactorily. One must be content with general trends and impressions.

In general, 'U' was designed for the specialist and 'P' for the general public, however, to get an adequate overview of the subject one must consult both books, and the contributions to each range from the presentations of original research, to the trite to the frankly ridiculous.

The contrast is remarkable between the sophistication of Maugé ('U' 160), or Meheust ('U' 352), and the naive optimism of Stringfield ('U' 145), Prytz ('U' 269) or McCampbell ('P' 348), or the essentially pseudoscientific presentations by Behrendt ('U' 255, 'P' 282), a dated anti-gravity theory far removed from the outlook and concerns of contemporary physics.

The opportunity is often given for readers to make up their own minds between contrasting views of particular aspects of the subject. For example Chalker ('U' 192) and Verga ('U' 197, 'P' 199) on physical evidence; Devereux ('P' 316) and Rutkowski

('P' 301, 'U' 273) on earthlights; or Hopkins ('P' 134) and Rimmer ('P' 155) on abductions, or between the editors themselves ('P' 373, 'P' 387) on the whole approach to the matter. On the other hand, treatment of individual cases is not the best. Perhaps getting a Danish writer to summarise over-exposed classics ('U' 48) was not the best approach. It may well be that the only individual case given sufficient treatment is Shough's excellent review of Lakenheath ('P' 82). The general trend of the two volumes is obvious. An extreme divide has grown up between US (or US raised and educated) defenders of the ETH, who invariably express their viewpoint in the most simplistic, people of another shape, next century's technology terms; and the essentially European perception of the UFO phenomena as a psycho-social gloss on natural phenomena.

The 'European' camp is itself divided between those whose primary interest is in the core 'real phenomenon' - largely seen as geo-physically related lights; and those whose interest lies in the psycho-social reactions to what may be regarded as the misinterpretations of fairly common objects or phenomena. Within this latter group, some viewpoints see the psycho-social reactions as the product of human culture and imagination; others detect the intervention of some supra-human intelligence (a.k.a. God?) in human affairs. All these groupings constitute a continuum of views about the reliability of eyewitness testimony and the relevance of technological solutions to human problems.

Readers of these books will find a good grounding in the relevance of physical traces, the cultural and psychological background, the historical background, media coverage, the rôle of photographic evidence, the use of computers, the earthlights debates and the abduction debates. Perhaps a general sophisticated study of the general occupant folklore would have been useful.

The contributions made by the editors to both books are especially valuable (it would be a pity if the only adult UFO book by Hilary Evans was to remain the strangely naive and out-of-character *Evidence for UFOs*).

Physically the FT volume is a large, handsome paperback which (despite some typesetting problems) does credit to Bob Rickard in his first venture as a book publisher. By contrast the commercially produced *Phenomena*, from the Robert Maxwell stable, appears to be printed on civil service lavatory paper.

UFOs is required reading, and *Phenomenon* should also be of interest to many *Magonia* readers
Peter Rogerson

HALSELL, Grace. *Prophecy and Politics; militant evangelists on the road to nuclear war*. Laurence and Hill, Westport, CN, 1986.

The folklore discussed by ufologists, even abduction lore, is pretty harmless compared with that of the militant 'moral majority' in the USA. This is a folklore of genuine 'apocalyptophilia' spun by people who dream of destroying the world. Believing themselves to be part of the 'saved remnant' who will be taken off by the lifeboat in the rapture, they glory in the thought of the destruction of everyone else, including their own families. The author suggests that the Israeli state cohabits with these characters in order to get funds through congress. Sadly, nowhere near the outrage has been devoted to the influence of these groups on President Reagan than has been shown over the mainly benign influence of a pop astrologer. *Peter Rogerson*

ELLISON, Arthur. *The Reality of the Paranormal*. Harrap, 1988. £12.95.

This book, by a former President of the SPR concentrates on spontaneous and field phenomena, rather than those of the laboratory. There are sections on a variety of topics, but few are developed fully. The usual psychic researchers gripes about 'materialist Western science' are paraded, and no concessions are made to the sceptical case - except where Ellison himself is the sceptic. The author's views are influenced by his Theosophist convictions, albeit by liberal ones. *Peter Rogerson*

HYNEK, J Allen, IMBROGNO, Philip J. and PRATT, Bob. *Night Siege; the Hudson Valley UFO sightings*. Ballantine Books, 1987. \$6.95.

Despite the authors' desperate attempts to prove otherwise, it is clear that the phenomenon to which the bulk of this book is devoted - lumbering, noisy, boomerang shaped rows of powerful lights, which can be photographed - have only a tangential connection with what most of us would regard as 'true UFOs'. The authors' attempts to transform these lights into giant spaceships

are, to put it mildly, unconvincing. Hoax by microlight or hanglider pilots versus secret military technology would seem to be the major options. For similar cases in the UK, see David Clarke's article 'Fly by Night' in *UFO Brigantia*, March/April 1988. To sweeten a rather dull pill, there are accounts of abduction fantasies which, unwittingly, show how these were generated by ufologists. *Peter Rogerson*

CARTER, Dale. *The Final Frontier*, Verso, 1988. £8.95.

The basic hypothesis of this book is that the dream of space flight quickly turned into nightmare. It begins with a detailed analysis of the ideas contained in Thomas Pynchon's massive fiction work, *Gravity's Rainbow*. This is extremely tedious and riddled with academic jargon but once Carter moves on to examine the postwar factors in America that brought about the Apollo moonlanding missions his views become far clearer and more significant. Vested interests used the space missions to line their own pockets, ease political and social tensions and intimidate foreign enemies. The utopia of the new frontier really hid the totalitarian ideology of the Nazi regime which had helped make spaceflight and missile technology practical - but this time the pill was sugared with the promise of consumer affluence for those who worked hard and believed in the white middle-class values of the USA.

The same trend can be seen in the development of other modern technologies. The dreams of hobbyists who built primitive radio sets or experimented with television systems soon found them shattered when military and industrial interests took over their patents.

There are several problems with Carter's ideas. One is that he is far too general and sweeping in his comments about America. Everything seems to lead to a great inevitable, unstoppable, inflexible, military industrial conspiracy, and no recognition of contrary forces or ideas is made.

Despite these faults, the book does offer an excellent overview of American society in

the postwar years and it provides a great analysis of the space programme and the many factors that contributed to its success in the 1960's.

This book might not seem like an obvious choice for ufologists, but it does provide the context for belief in space exploration and life on other planets. The eagerness of the American imagination for space missions can tell us why and how the contactee movement took root.

The failure of the Apollo missions to maintain social cohesion and understanding can be seen as part of the factors that have led to the fearful stories of the abductees. In fact, *Gravity's Rainbow* itself contains many examples of characters being seduced and controlled by illusions which are similar to abductee experiences. In the light of recent American cases the interaction between literature, technology, ideology and UFO beliefs is worth considering. *Nigel Watson*



VALLEE, Jacques. *Dimension; a casebook of alien contact*. Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1988. \$17.95.

A new book from Vallée is something we would once have waited for off the boat as eagerly as Americans once flocked to the New York docks to secure their copy of the latest episode from Charles Dickens bearing news of the death of Little Nell. However, since hearing Vallée speak in London a few years ago under the aegis of a curious UFO organisation we have not heard of before or since, we began to have a suspicion that the

former Greatest-Living-Ufologist's views and understanding of the subject may not have developed greatly since the days of *Passport to Magonia* - certainly his stage presentation hadn't.

This book confirms our suspicions. It is simply a scissors-and-past job on the author's previous books: largely *Passport* with a dash of *Invisible College* and *Messengers of Deception*, the only concession to anything that has happened in the last ten years is a few notes about the Hopkinsonian abductions scattered around.

This isn't to say that the book is worthless - nothing Vallée writes is - just that it adds nothing to what we have already learned from him. If you have none of his other books on your shelves, this is probably as good an introduction as any to the work of one of the most influential figures in ufology (he gave us our title, after all), otherwise keep your money in your pocket. I can't help feeling it would have been more honest if the publishers had called the book 'Jacques Vallée's Greatest Hits', rather than implying a major new work from ufology's fading guru. *J Rimmer*

DEVLIN, Judith. *The Superstitious Mind; French Peasants and the supernatural in the 19th century*. Yale, 1987. \$20.00.

This is perhaps an example of the 'old folklore' which relegates the study to geographically and temporally remote zones. Devlin sees 'superstition' as a psychological mechanism for dealing with the vagaries of life. Possession, prophecy, visions, fairies, etc., are discussed. Though Devlin suggests that she does not regard superstition as *prima facie* anti-rational, the accounts tend to assimilate such experiences to mental illness or inebriation, suffused with a 'how could they believe that' feeling. It is much easier to patronise those who cannot answer back, yet performances like many discussed herein are still taking place in modern societies. There are insights however: the connection between La Sallette with its widespread 'Letters from Jesus', and the contactee movement with 'letters from nowhere'. *PR*